

FSIS NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

This module covers an overview of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

OBJECTIVES

After completing this module, you will be able to:

1. Identify USDA's role in government.
2. Identify FSIS' role in USDA, and where we get our authority.
3. Describe FSIS' workforce and offices, and the roles of each.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

USDA web homepage

FSIS web homepage

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Introduction

American consumers spend about \$617 billion dollars annually on food. Of that amount, \$500 billion dollars are spent on foods produced here in the United States. U.S. meat and poultry exports are America's top agricultural export.

Meat and poultry product purchases in the United States make up a large portion of the monies spent on U.S. produced products. Those product purchases equate to Americans consuming 236 pounds of meat and poultry products per person each year. Not only do we have an enormous supply of product, but we have one of the safest supplies of meat, poultry, and egg products. How is this possible?

Behind safe product production is an army of public health professionals and support personnel. The safety of our products is largely a result of sustained regulatory surveillance, research, and the educational efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Some examples of these front-line and behind the scenes professionals are In-plant Inspection Teams, Veterinarians, Chemists, Microbiologist, Analysts and Statisticians, Secretaries and Specialist, Economists, Training Teams; and, the list goes on and on. To understand how the system works and how these individuals play a role in it, let's review the "BIG PICTURE".

The "BIG PICTURE"

We begin our review with the U.S. Constitution. The Constitution prescribes the responsibilities of the government's three branches:

- Legislative,
- Executive; and
- Judicial.

These three branches all have roles to ensure the safety of the U.S. food supply.

Congress, the Legislative Branch, enacts statutes or laws that are designed to ensure the safety of the food supply; and, establishes the nation's level of protection. The Executive Branch is responsible for the implementation of these laws. They do so by developing, and enforcing regulations. When enforcement actions, regulations, or policies lead to disputes; the Judicial Branch is charged to render impartial decisions on the development, implementation, and/or enforcement of those laws. Under which branch would you expect to find your role in the "BIG PICTURE"?

Food Safety and Inspection Service personnel find themselves in the same branch of government as the President of the United States, the Executive Branch. This branch, headed by the President consists of the Vice President, department heads and the heads of independent agencies. The Department Heads, also known as the Cabinet, advise the President on any issues that relate to their respective offices.

The Independent Agencies help carry out policy, or provide special services. Examples of these special services are environmental protection, federal banking, merit systems protection and personnel management to name but a few. Within the Independent Agencies group we find a total of 15 Executive Departments:

- Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Defense
- Department of Education
- Department of Energy
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of the Interior
- Department of Justice
- Department of Labor
- Department of State
- Department of Transportation
- Department of the Treasury
- Department of Veterans Affairs

The Department of Agriculture is one of the largest and most diverse departments in the Federal Government.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Executives

Heading the Department of Agriculture is the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This position is an appointed position, and was created to ensure oversight of the entire Department. Our next Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, replacing Secretary Veneman, will be our 28th.

Assisting the Secretary of Agriculture is the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. In this role, the Deputy Secretary oversees the day-to-day activities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and helps support the mission of USDA.

USDA'S Mission

USDA's mission statement reads:

"Provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management. "

That is, USDA provides leadership in agriculture issues. Those issues would include: the management of traditional farm programs, private lands conservation, domestic food assistance, agriculture research and education, agricultural marketing, international trade, meat and poultry inspection, forestry, and rural development programs.

To accomplish its mission, the Department of Agriculture is divided into seven Mission Areas:

- Natural Resources and Environment;
- Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services;
- Rural Development;
- Marketing and Regulatory Programs;
- Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services;
- Research, Education and Economics; and
- Food Safety.

Each Mission Area is headed by an Under Secretary. Overseeing the policies and programs of the Food Safety Mission Area is the Under Secretary for Food Safety.

The Food Safety Mission Area ensures the Nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products are safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged. This Mission Area also plays a key role in the President's Council on Food Safety; and, has been instrumental in coordinating a National Food Safety Strategic Plan among various partner Agencies (the Department of Health and Human Services, the Environmental Protection Agency, and others).

Just as in the overall structure for USDA, the Food Safety Under Secretary is assisted by the Deputy Under Secretary. The Deputy Under Secretary works directly with the Under Secretary to oversee the policies and programs of the Food Safety and Inspection Service Agency (FSIS). Another role of the Deputy Under Secretary is to chair the U.S. Codex Steering Committee, which provides food safety guidance to U.S. delegations to the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service

FSIS administers the federal meat and poultry inspection program, and the egg products program; to assure safety, wholesomeness and truthful labeling of these products. This is done under the authority afforded to us under the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA), the Poultry Products Inspection Act (PPIA), and the Egg Products Inspection Act (EPIA).

Our Agency sets standards for food safety and regulates all raw and processed meat, poultry, and egg products sold in interstate commerce; including imported products. We also enforce and conduct food safety consumer education programs.

Although the Under Secretary and the Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety are responsible for overseeing the food safety policies and programs, the Administrator of the Food Safety and Inspection Service is responsible for the day-to-day food safety activity oversight. Our most recent past Administrator, Dr. Gary McKee established a new vision and new goals for FSIS. We continue to embrace this vision of "becoming a World Class Public Health Agency", and those same goals which align us with the Food Safety Mission Area.

Appointed in February of 2004, Dr. Barbara Masters is serving as the Acting Administrator of FSIS until a permanent Administrator is appointed. Dr. Masters brings a wealth of expertise and experience to this position, having served with the Agency in the following capacities:

- Director of the Slaughter Operations Staff,
- Branch Chief in Processing Operations,
- Staff Officer for the Slaughter Operations Staff and the Technology Transfer and Coordination Staff, and
- Inspector-In-Charge in a livestock slaughter and processing establishment.

In her current role, Dr. Masters carries on activities to support the Agency's vision for becoming a "World Class Public Health Agency".

USDA Headquarters

USDA's Headquarters complex buildings are located in Washington, D.C.; on the National Mall at 1400 Independence Avenue, SW. The Jamie L. Whitten Building houses about 1000 people including the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary's Chief of Staff, the Policy Staff, the Operations Staff, the Scheduling Staff and White House Liaison; and, the Under Secretaries and FSIS' Administrator.

Across the street is the South Building built in 1942. It is called this as a result of sitting south of the Whitten Building. Within the South Building we find the headquarters office of FSIS' Offices and Program Areas. The South Building is connected to the Whitten Building by an underground tunnel running under Independence Avenue; and, by two archways formed over this same street.

FSIS- A Public Health Regulatory Agency

The Food Safety and Inspection Service is determined to be a "World Class Public Health Agency". But, what is a public health agency?

Historically, public health focused on the absence of disease, disease prevention and control. For FSIS, public health is improving the health status of the citizens. This includes protecting, promoting and enhancing the health status of the American public. However, FSIS is also a regulatory agency. In what aspects are we a regulatory agency?

Earlier, we discussed the branches of government. We said that the Legislative Branch, or Congress, enacts statutes or laws that are designed to ensure the safety of the food supply. In our earlier discussions, we also discussed the Acts that were enacted by the Legislative Branch:

- FMIA – The Federal Meat Inspection Act
- PPIA – The Poultry Products Inspection Act
- EPIA – The Egg Products Inspection Act

As part of the Executive Branch, it is FSIS' responsibility to implement these laws. We regulate meat, poultry and egg products. Thus, our role as a "regulatory agency" is to use the Acts to improve the health status of the American public.

FSIS Vision

It is essential that everyone in FSIS, regardless of his or her role, recognize that we all play a part in achieving our common vision:

To build FSIS into a “World Class Public Health Agency” that is a model for other public health institutions.

Achieving our vision must be carried out on two levels - collectively and individually. On a collective level, there are three basic functions which we apply in order to operate as a successful public health agency. The first function is assessment, which simply means we identify public health problems. The second function is policy development, where we determine what actions and resources are needed to solve the problems. And the third function is assurance, where we make sure the job gets done.

As individuals, employees may specialize in a particular function. For example, our field employees specialize in assuring the American public that the job gets done. Many of the employees at Headquarters are responsible for identifying public health problems; and others for using that information to develop policies. Thus, it is a multitude of individual efforts which each one of us employs every day that contribute to FSIS becoming a “World Class Public Health Agency”.

FSIS - The Organization

Now that we’ve answered the “What is FSIS” question, let’s shift gears a little before we go into more detail explaining the “Who is FSIS”. As a part of our FSIS family, we want to make sure that you have what you need to make your new transition as easy as possible. Our standard is to provide you with quality services and benefits, which hopefully exceed your expectations.

At FSIS, our Human Resources Division within the Office of Management, supports and enhances the Agency's food safety mission by providing our employees with human resource services that are customer focused and timely. We will further discuss the Office of Management later in this training; but for now, let’s discuss HRD.

HRD provides services in the areas of:

- Employee benefits and workers compensation
- Employee recognition and incentive awards
- Performance management
- Position classification and position management
- Salary and wage administration
- Payroll and personnel processing; and
- Many others.

You can go to HRD’s website for additional information on the many services they provide. Their web address is <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/om/hrd>.

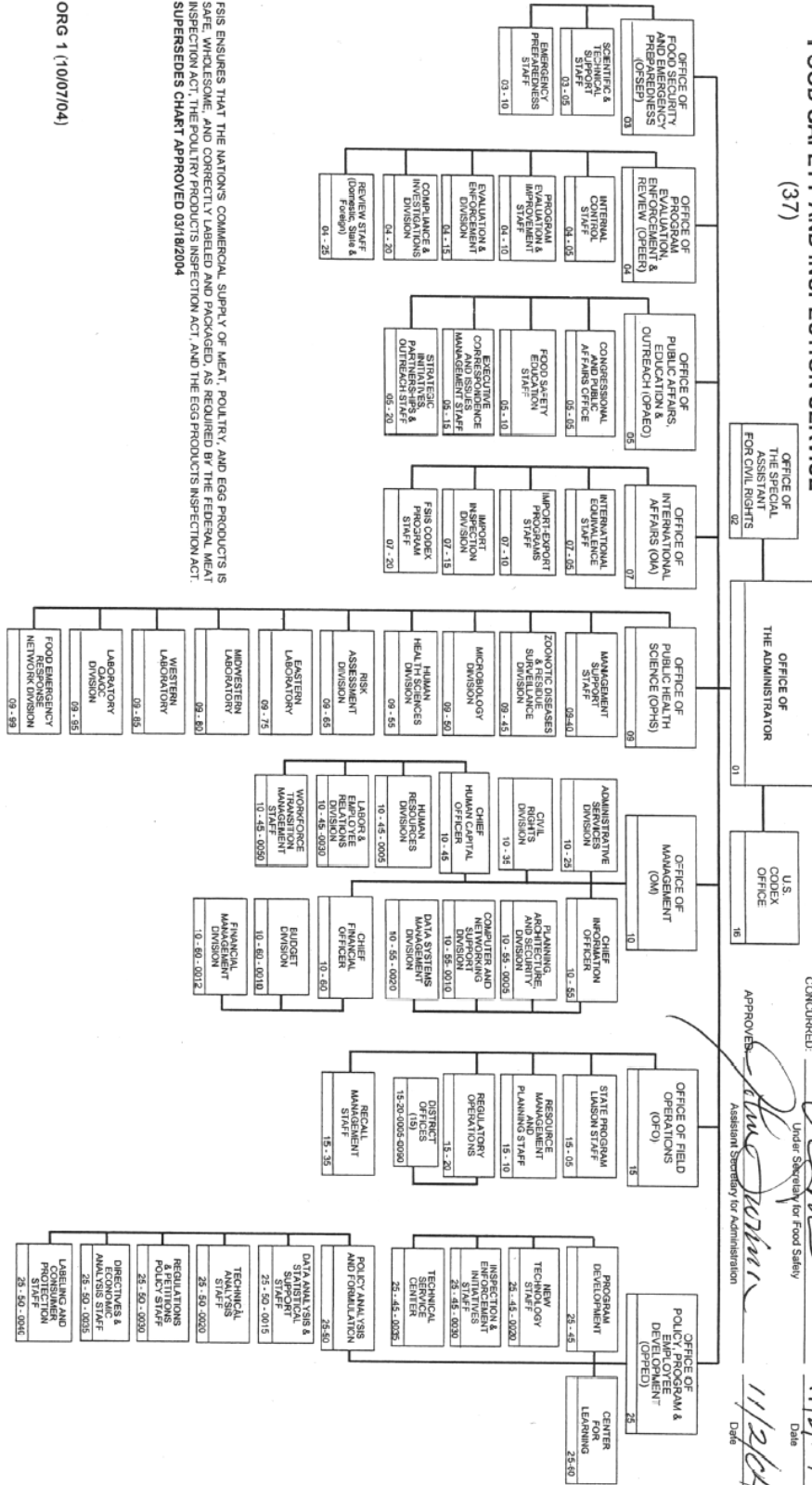
In August of 2003, the Department approved the reorganization of our Agency. This organizational structure enables us to better execute our responsibilities as a World Class Public Health Regulatory Agency.

FSIS Offices

We are a large agency with over 10,000 employees housed throughout the nation. You can see the functional roles on the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service Organizational Chart on the next page.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE

(37)



RECOMMENDED: *Barbara Masters*
Acting Administrator, Food Safety and Inspection Service

CONCURRED: *[Signature]*
Under Secretary for Food Safety

APPROVED: *[Signature]*
Assistant Secretary for Administration

11/21/04
Date

11/21/04
Date

11/21/04
Date

We will visit each of these units and see how we work together to accomplish our food safety activities.

Office of the Administrator

Starting at the top of the organizational chart, you will see the Office of the Administrator. The Administrator has overall responsibility for the entire Food Safety and Inspection Service. This Office Area also includes the Special Assistant for Civil Rights, the U.S. Codex Office, and eight Program Areas.

U.S. Codex Office

We've already talked about the U.S. Codex Office, let's turn to the Special Assistant for Civil Rights.

Office of the Special Assistant for Civil Rights

To the left of the Office of the Administrator, is the Special Assistant for Civil Rights. He or she serves as a direct link between the Administrator and Agency employees, and between the Administrator and external groups. The Special Assistant for Civil Rights advises, and is the civil rights spokesperson for the Administrator. Now let's discuss the eight Program Areas.

Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness (OFSEP)

On August 11, 2002, FSIS created the Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness (OFSEP). The primary function of this office is to coordinate an Agency response to terrorist threats or deliberate acts of terrorism affecting the supply of meat, poultry, and egg products. Additionally, the Office is responsible for implementing a plan to prevent or deter terrorist threats, and deliberate terrorist acts. OFSEP also prepares procedures for the containment of affected facilities and products, should it become necessary; and, for the removal and disposal of affected products.

OFSEP is comprised of two staffs that work with the USDA Homeland Security Office. The first staff is the Emergency Preparedness Staff, whose primary function is to develop partnerships with federal, state, and local government agencies, industry and other organizations; that can share information, technical expertise and resources to promote food security. They also are charged with providing support and leadership in building a national infrastructure, including laboratory response capacity, security and continuity of operations plans.

The second staff, the Scientific and Technical Support Staff, deals with radiological, biological, and chemical attacks on the food supply. This staff is preparing standards that First Responders can use to recognize and safely handle product that has been made unfit for human consumption; and, will also prepare plans for handling and disposing of contaminated food products.

By coordinating the efforts of the various food security groups inside and outside of the Agency, the Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness will continue to ensure that FSIS meets its commitment.

Office of Program Evaluation, Enforcement and Review (OPEER)

OPEER provides the evaluation, review, assessment, investigation, enforcement and audit capacity to improve management effectiveness, efficiency and decision making. It is through this proactive structure that OPEER alerts the Under Secretary and Administrator of any potential or harmful compromise, or failure, of FSIS programs or operations; thereby affecting:

- field inspection effectiveness;
- food safety policy;
- initiating criminal, civil and administrative sanctions;
- fiscal accountability; and
- human resource management

nationally and internationally. In many ways, OPEER serves as the ears and eyes of the Agency.

This work is conducted by the Internal Control Staff (ICS), the Program Evaluation and Improvement Staff Compliance and Investigation Division (PEIS), the Evaluation and Enforcement Division (EED), and the Program Review Staff. OPEER personnel move freely across geographical lines and in foreign countries to carry out its mission activities.

Office of Public Affairs, Education and Outreach (OPAEO)

OPAEO play a critical role in promoting the Agency's public health mission by conveying a single, unified and consistent message to diverse external audiences; and, to all FSIS employees. They are also responsible for conducting public communication programs to inform and educate a variety of audiences about Food Safety and Inspection Service activities. These audiences include Congress, Media, Industry, Government, Academia and Consumers.

While the Executive Correspondence and Issues Management Staff prepare the Agency's written responses to food safety correspondence; the Congressional and Public Affairs Office is also a Congressional liaison staff within OPAEO; and, they also are the liaison to the media and other constituents, and create FSIS' "News and Notes". Specific interagency liaison work regarding policy and program initiatives is conducted by the Strategic Initiatives Outreach and Partnership Staff. They also provide assistance with small plant, and very small plant, communication and assistance needs.

OPAEO's Food Safety and Education Staff conduct communication activities. These are carried out through a variety of means; such as public meetings, the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline, news releases, visits to members of Congress and their staffs, and the FSIS website. The Agency's consumer and food handler food safety education campaigns and programs are also handled by OPAEO.

Office of International Affairs (OIA)

The Office of International Affairs is responsible for all FSIS activities related to the import and export of meat, poultry and egg products; and, for all official Agency communications with foreign governments. Their work is accomplished through their International Equivalence Staff, the Import-Export Programs Staff, the Import Inspection Division, and the Codex Program Staff.

Federal inspection laws require countries exporting to the United States to operate inspection systems equivalent to the U.S. inspection system. OIA assures equivalence by assessing results of on-site audits of foreign country inspection systems, and results of port-of-entry reinspection.

OIA also negotiates with over 100 foreign countries to establish requirements for the export of U.S. meat and poultry. The Office represents FSIS in inter-Agency and international bi-lateral and multi-lateral meetings to establish policies, and negotiate standards that assure consumer protection and facilitate trade.

Office of Public Health and Science (OPHS)

OPHS provides leadership to FSIS and USDA, and assures the establishment and support of scientifically sound food safety programs and policies to reduce or eliminate foodborne illness.

The OPHS staff persons (Biologists, Chemists, Computer Specialists, Engineers, Epidemiologists, Food Technologists, Microbiologists, Nurses, Physicians, Public Health Specialists, Risk Analysts, Statisticians, Toxicologists, Veterinary Medical Officers, Veterinary Pathologists and other professionals) develop scientific and public health information related to meat, poultry, and egg products from their conception to consumption; and, uses that information to assess potential human health risks throughout the farm-to-table continuum.

OPHS operates three FSIS Field Service Laboratories (Eastern Laboratory, Midwestern Laboratory and Western Laboratory) that provide support in the areas of microbiology, pathology, food chemistry, species identification, entomology, extraneous materials, and other scientific disciplines. This Office also manages the Accredited Laboratory Program, which grants accreditation to non-federal analytical chemistry laboratories for food chemistry, and several classes of chemical and drug residue. Through laboratory results, and other function area work within OPHS, Agency initiated regulatory issues and policies (e.g. performance standards) have sound science based support.

Office of Management (OM)

Earlier we discussed the many benefits provided to FSIS employees through the Human Resources Area. Let's look more closely at their parent Office, the Office of Management.

OM is made up a of a diverse group of over 400 employees who work in Washington, D.C.; Beltsville, MD; Minneapolis, MN; and Des Moines, IA; as well as, in a number of field locations throughout the U.S. They serve in a variety of administrative, technical,

professional occupations. These folks provide a full range of centralized administrative and support services; in addition to assisting in the day-to-day management of FSIS. Beyond the previous discussion that we have had about human resources, the OM employees support the agency in the areas of:

- Budget;
- Finance;
- Information technology;
- Cyber-security,
- Telecommunications;
- Business systems improvement;
- Personal and real property;
- Civil rights;
- Health and safety;
- Labor and employee relations;
- Electronic commerce-eGovernment;
- Workforce transition;
- Mediation;
- Contracting;
- Procurement;
- Workforce violence prevention; and
- Management improvement and internal controls.

OM also publishes FSIS' internal newsletter, the "Beacon"; which runs such diverse topics as agency events and celebrations, health and safety issues, employee benefits, Thrift Savings plan information and an update of current Agency initiatives. This can be accessed via Outlook, under Public Folders/All Public Folders/Newsletters/OM's Newsletter-The Beacon. You can also submit information, or provide comment on "Beacon" articles, by e-mailing the staff at Beacon@fsis.usda.gov.

Office of Field Operations (OFO)

The Office of Field Operations is the largest program area within the Food Safety and Inspection Service. Field Operations employs over 8,000 field inspection personnel. This includes Food Inspectors, Consumer Safety Inspectors, Public Health Veterinarians, Veterinary Medical Specialists, Enforcement Investigation and Analysis Officers, and Compliance Officers.

Field Operations manages a nationwide program of public health protection through inspection and verification of HACCP systems. This office is also responsible for enforcing the Humane Slaughter Act for livestock. It also verifies that other consumer protection requirements (OCP) are met at all federally inspected establishments. OFO staff also collect samples during food processing to ensure microbiological, physical and chemical hazards are being controlled; and as needed, verify that establishments appropriately conduct recall procedures, detain product in commerce and request that a seizure action be filed against such product.

However, the primary function of OFO is within the assurance component of the Public Health Model (assessment, policy development, assurance), and maintain computerized

inspection databases on the food safety, food security, and consumer protection programs.

To accomplish their public health mission, personnel of OFO are located at:

- Headquarters in Washington, D.C.;
- 15 District Offices throughout the United States;
- Federally inspected meat, poultry and egg establishments throughout the United States, Guam, The Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

That is, Field Operations implement the policies developed by the Office of Policy, Program and Employee Development and adopted by the Agency; and play a role in the planning and formulation of Agency policy.

Office of Policy, Program and Employee Development (OPPED)

The Office of Policy, Program and Employee Development is responsible for developing and recommending all domestic policy for the Food Safety and Inspection Service. This includes:

- gathering information and conducting analyses necessary to set policy,
- developing regulations,
- establishing new programs and systems,
- establish general labeling, food additives, labeling and product composition aspects,
- modifying existing standards and programs, and
- providing technical support and training.

OPPED collaborates with other offices within FSIS to ensure statutory mandates are met. They also work closely with the Office of Field Operations in developing procedures and methods for conducting inspections. The Center for Learning, within OPPED provides training and education for the entire FSIS workforce to further OPPED's work.

Summary

So now you have a closer look at Food Safety and Inspection Service and our many food safety activities.

We started with about 10,358 employees. That number has increased. You have joined us, and together we can accomplish our mission. As we conclude this part of your orientation, let's work daily toward supporting our mission:

**A public health regulatory agency within
the United States Department of Agriculture
that is responsible for ensuring that
the Nation's supply of meat, poultry, and
egg products is safe, wholesome,
and correctly labeled and packaged.**

Agency New Employee Orientation

NOTES: